**Lesson Plan for Vacation Bible School**

**Middle District Baptist Association**

**July 13th 14th 15th 2021**

**Rev. Karen Johnson Moore Instructor**

**Tuesday 7:45-8:45 pm**

**Hosea** – “What’s Love Got to Do with It?

Scriptures: Hosea 1:1-4, 6-9’ 3:1-5, 6:1-3

“The Family” & “The Church ”

**Wednesday 7:45-8:45 pm**

**Abraham** – “From the Ghetto to Greatness”

Scriptures:Genesis 12:1-8 and Hebrews 11:8-12

“Strong Role Models” Who are they?

**Thursday 7:45-8:45pm**

**Deborah** – “Sista Take Charge”

Scriptures: Judges 4:1-10, 14-15; 5:1-3

 Social Problems in the Black Community

**Tuesday July 13- 15, 2021**

**Hosea**

Scriptures: Hosea 1:1-4, 6-9; 3:1-5; 6:1-3

“The Family” & “The Church ”

**Hosea: What’s Love Got to Do With It?**

**Let’s Discover:** Can God use a prostitute to help a prophet understand His love and kindness, His patience and forgiveness?

**Let’s Discover** how God uses “bad” people to teach lessons to “good” people, to a society gone wrong, to a nation He loves.

There are times in our lives when God has to break us down in order to make us brand new again. From Broken to Brand new is what happened to Hosea

The name “Hosea” means salvation. The book of Hosea is the first in a series of books by a group called the 12 minor prophets. This does not mean that the “minor” prophets are less important than the “Major” prophets. It means that their books are shorter in length.

 Hosea is believed to be a contemporary of the prophet Amos. His work is divided into two parts. The first part chapters one through three, comprises both the biographical and autobiographical dimensions of the little book. It is biographical because Hosea speaks for God. It is autobiographical because he relates to his own experienced. The second part, chapters four through fourteen, comprises the spiritual dimension of the book.

 The book of Hosea contains one of world literature’s most profound and tragic love stories. It proves God’s ability to use the circumstances of life to provide a greater lesson of His enduring love.

**Hosea the Man**

Beyond what is given in chapters one through three, little is known about Hosea. We are told that his father was Beeri (Hosea 1:1) but where he lived, what he did before being called to prophesy, or when he was called are all features left to our imagination. However, form his writing we gain some insights into Hosea’s personality. He was well-versed in Israel’s political and religious situation. It is also obvious from his writings that he was a man of ability and culture. He had a grasp of the literature of his day, was thoroughly steeped in Israel’s historical tradition, and understood that the prophet was God’s primary instrument in dealing with His people, Israel.

**Hosea’s Wife**

 The prophet Hosea totally identifies with God. This is especially apparent in Chapters 1 and 3. In chapter one he is given a command to marry a “prostitute” (1:2). Bible scholars have interpreted “prostitute” in three ways:

1. To show God’s intimate relationship with Israel
2. Gomer had fallen into an immoral life after Hosea married her
3. To indicate that Hosea knew Gomer was a prostitute when he a married her.

A simple direct reading or the text suggests that the third view is probable the correct one. Religion in Israel had been debased by the worship of Baal. In Baalism, both men and women engaged in sexual relationships as part of their worship. A “prostitute” probably designated an ordinary Hebrew woman of the time who had offered her body in the worship of Baal, not once who made a living as a common prostitute. For a man such as Hosea, whose sensitivity emerges from every page of his book, the command to marry a woman of whoredom was extraordinary and a most unusual form of prophetic vocation.

**Hosea’s Call**

The reason for God’s call to His prophet is quickly given: “Israel has acted like a “prostitute” (1:2). From the very beginning, the connection between Hosea’s personal experience and that of God is seen. The major themes of the book of Hosea are illustrated in his personal experiences.

 The prophet is commanded, “Go and love your wife again even though she commits adultery with another lover.” (3:1). This verse has caused much controversy among scholars regarding the identity of the woman Hosea is commanded to love. Is she Gomer or is that another woman? Perhaps they are one and the same. The Lord has renewed His call to Hosea to love his wife despite the fact that she has returned to her former immoral lifestyle.

**Hosea’s Times**

The career of the prophet Hosea began during the reign of King Jeroboam II, a time of great prosperity and peace. It ended with Israel moving swiftly toward slavery in Babylon.

 The events and conditions of the period, 750-722 BC, are reflected vividly in Hosea’s writings. At the time Hosea names his son Jezreel, Jeroboam II, the great-grandson of Jehu, was on the throne. During his reign Hosea’ marriage to Gomer and the birth of their three children took place. Much of what is said in Hosea 1-3 mirrors the early years of Jeroboam’s rule. These years of political stability, economic prosperity, and vigorous religious observance (1:2-9; 2:2-15). But this did not last and Hosea foretold the coming doom.

 Shortly after ascending the throne, Zechariah, son of Jeroboam II, was murdered by the usurper Shallum, who in turn was assassinated by Menahem. Therefore, Israel was governed by the politics of conspiracy and assignations. Only one of the kings who succeeded Jeroboam II, Menahem, died a natural death.

 In their desperation to hold on to power, Israel’s kings sought foreign help, paying tribute alternately to Assyria and then Egypt. They did not seek the God of their fathers, for He was no longer meaningful to them. Israel’s leaders and people were morally diseased and spiritually bankrupt.

 Their political policy was no remedy for their moral decline which had affected the priesthood (8:9; 10:6). Those who should have been pointing the nation toward God as the source of healing and deliverance were themselves in need of healing. They had caused Israel to backslide. Because it increased their revenues, priests had turned into bandits and rejoiced in the sins of the people. Things had gotten so bad that the prophet exclaims in great anxiety. “There is no truth, nor goodness, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, thy break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed: (4:1-2)

**Hosea’s Message (Chapters 4-14)**

1. **Israel’s Condition**. Hosea tells of God being deeply in love with His people who are constantly breaking His heart. Therefore, Hosea’s indictments against Israel were that her sin was worse than adultery: She had played the harlot and become a prostitute for hire to Baal. The god of Canaan (2:12-12). He asserted that Israel was without knowledge and this accounted for her ignorance of God and His law (4:6; 5:4; 8:12).

While they paid honor to God with their lips, in reality, they honored and served Baal. It was for their lack of honor for the true God that Hosea heaped his severest criticisms and rebukes on Israel. Reduced to its simplest terms, the indictments were Israel had broken her covenant with Jehovah and rebelled against His instructions. Israel’s entire corporate life in religion and politics was a rejection of Jehovah and a complete betrayal of the identity He had created for them.

 That they were living in sin was nothing new. From the time of their first entry into the land of Canaan, they sinned time and time again. They were continually adding sin upon sin until their evil deeds became a way of the life the sum of their character (7:1; 4:12). They were prisoners of their sin, trapped by the identity that they had created (5:4).

 Israel’s faithlessness had reached such a state that they were unrecognizable as the people of God. To illustrate this fact, God instructed Hosea to name his third child Loammi, “Not My People” (1:9). They had become unidentifiable from the Canaanites because they looked and acted as though they had no knowledge of God. Their lives were devoid of God’s principles and righteousness. They were God’s people in name only and brought shame upon the name of God. These were the people among whom God sent Hosea to prophesy.

1. **Israel’s Judgment.** Hosea’s rebukes were focused on Israel’s failures, which centered in two areas; their cults or religious life and their political life. Israel was involved in the fertility cults of Canaan. In its simplest form, those who worshiped Baal gave him credit for being the source of life. They believed that because of Baal’s blessings, plants, animals and people experienced life and growth. This directly contradicted the Israelites’ faith in Jehovah, their God, so Hosea looked upon Baal as in a great struggle for the sol of a nation that was supposed to be committed to Jehovah. Hosea declared that there were two kinds of specific and fundamental judgments for the sins of Israel; judgment in relation to the fertility cult and in relation to the king’s corrupt politics.

 First, the fruitfulness of the land and the people’s fertility, which Israel attributed to Baal, would cease (2:9-13; 4:3, 10; 8:7; 9:2, 11-14, 16). Abundant blessings would be replaced by the curse of famine, hunger, and infertility.

 Secondly, Israel would suffer devastating military defeat and finally political collapse (7:16; 8:3, 13, 10:6, 14). All of her military strategies would fail, and her alliances would prove futile. All of these judgments were the consequences of her unfaithful behavior. The sins of the past had caught up with her, and the sins of the present doomed her future. She had betrayed the God of her fathers and was reaping the chastisement of her betrayal (13:7; 5:14, 12).

1. **God’s Promise of Renewal** (14:1-8). Hosea preached that although Israel was to be chastised by Jehovah, he still loved her and desired her restoration. Hosea ends his prophecy by making a plea for Israel’s repentance and a promise of healing and love. Including his call for repentance is Hosea’s penitential prayer. Although he is not involved in Israel’s sins, he identifies with the sins of the nation (vv.4-8). In response to Hosea’s prayer, God says that if Israel would repent, turn away from Baal, and return to Him. He would forgive their sins and turn away from the impending disasters.

 Where there would be a disease, there would be healing; where His righteous indignation would be poured out upon His wayward children, there would be instead an outpouring of divide love, and instead of drought and infertility, there would be an abundance of fruit. If Israel would return and dwell beneath the shadow of her God, she would come to know that it is God who takes care of her. She would then know that her fruitfulness was from the God of her fathers, and not from Baal. If she repented of her sins, she would, at last, learn the true knowledge of God.

**The African American Connection**

1. **The Family**

The breakup of the family is one of the most critical problems facing African American today. The African American family is under extreme pressure from forces within and without. Within the Black community is a high divorce and separation rate. According to the Census Bureau of 2016, one-third of African American children live in homes headed by females. The dysfunctional family, the product of the new morality, has produced many sons without nurturing fathers to provide responsible role models.

 The family is one of the major concerns addressed by **Hosea.** The character of his leadership is seen in his sense of family responsibility. He made every effort to keep his family together. His love and sense of compassion, as well as his strength of character, are clearly seen in his attempt to provide stability for his family. He does not hide from unpleasant family circumstances but instead accepts his responsibility as head of his family

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1. **The Church**

Historically the church has been the center of the African American community. Faith in its leadership has been strong. Usually, church leaders were perceived as exemplifying high moral principles and were held in high esteem. They were sought out for their understanding, concern, and compassion. Has this perception changed? Because of the failure of many of its leaders, many youths within the Black community are rejecting their heritage in the church. They no longer seek the comfort and leadership that the church provided for so long. What many persons within the church fail to take into account is that nations always experience a rapid decline when its religious leaders are filled with avarice and corruption; “like people, like priest” (Hosea 4:9). The church, the family and the nation are tied together. The failure of any one of the three affects the others. Where the family and the church are strong, the nation is strong.

1. **What Do You Think?**
2. Is it still true that our two strongest institutions are the family and the church?
3. What are three or four concrete ways that the family can strengthen the church and the church can strengthen the family?
4. What is the evidence that the African American church is the most important institution in the Black community?
5. Today, what role does the Black family play in the lives of African Americans?
6. How can churches build communities?

 Taken from the book: Just Like Us – Biblical Models for Our Community compiled and edited by Bennie Goodwin, PhD Information gathered from information written by Professor Marvin Goodwin

Census Bureau Releases New Estimates on America’s Families and Living Arrangements

**DEC. 2, 2020** — Newly released estimates from the [U.S. Census Bureau’s annual America’s Families and Living Arrangements](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2020/demo/families/cps-2020.html) release show that the number of parents with children under age 18 and living at home declined by about 3 million over the past decade, dropping from about 66.1 million parents in 2010 to 63.1 million in 2020.

The living arrangements of parents changed less over the past 10 years. In 2020, 78% of parents living with children were married, compared to 77% in 2010. Adults living with an unmarried, cohabiting partner made up 7% of parents with coresident children under 18 in both 2010 and 2020. Finally, parents living without a partner accounted for 16% of parents in 2010 and 15% of parents in 2020.

Living arrangements differ between fathers and mothers. In 2020, 70% of mothers and 87% of fathers living with children under 18 were married. It was more common for mothers, however, to live without a partner — 23% of mothers and only 6% of fathers were living without a partner.

Other highlights:

**Households**

* There are 36.2 million one-person households, which is 28% of all households. In 1960, single-person households represented only 13% of all households.

**Family**

* The number of families with their own children under 18 in the household declined from 2000 to 2020. In 2020, 40% of all families lived with their own children under 18, compared to 44% in 2010 and 48% in 2000.

**Marriage**

* In 2020, 33% of adults ages 15 and over had never been married, up from 23% in 1950.
* The estimated median age to marry for the first time is 30.5 for men and 28.1 for women, up from ages 23.7 and 20.5, respectively, in 1947.
* One-quarter (25%) of children under age 15 living in married-couple families had a stay-at-home mother, compared to only 1% with a stay-at-home father.

**Living Arrangements**

More than half (58%) of adults ages 18 to 24 lived in their parental home, up from 55% in 2019.  The increase was seen for both men (56% in 2019 to 60% in 2020) and women (53% in 2019 and 56% in 2020). Estimates for men have not been that high since 2016, and for women, this is the highest percentage living in their parents’ home since these data were first collected in 1960. It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic may have impacted this year’s estimate. Colleges and universities sent students home in the spring of 2020 when Current Population Survey Annual Social and Economic Supplement (CPS ASEC) data were collected. However, college students who live in on-campus student housing are counted as living in their parents’ home in CPS, regardless of the year.

These statistics come from the [2020 CPS ASEC](https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/cps.html), which has collected statistics on families for more than 60 years. The data show characteristics of households, living arrangements, married/unmarried couples, and children.

For more data on families and living arrangements, visit [Families and Living Arrangements](https://www.census.gov/topics/families.html) at census.gov.

**Wednesday, July 14, 2021**

**Abraham- From the Ghetto to Greatness**

Scriptures: **Genesis 12:1-8; Hebrews 11:8-12**

**“Strong Role Models” Who are they?**

**Let’s Discover**: Can God us an ordinary pagan, an idol worshiper, as the father of a new people, to enjoy a new relationship, received a new promise and envision a new homeland?

**Let’s discover** how God can use a person to change people from having a spiritually poor home and neighborhood to accomplishing an extraordinary task.

 African American Christians have always turned to the Old Testament for direction and solace in times of turmoil. This is quite evident in some Negro spirituals. Often the emphasis was on identification with the Israelites in their enslavement in Egypt and their liberation from bondage through the Exodus. But the Exodus experience is only one of many points of identification. Abraham’s experience of uprootedness and calling by the Almighty to serve Him as leader of a nation and of many nations in a new land is also quite relevant.

**What’s In a Name?**

Today, names are chosen often because they remind us of our relatives or close friends, or because the name sound beautiful and we like it. In the biblical practice of naming, each name and name change marked a trait or expectation of the specific individual.

 When we first meet Abraham his name is Abram or Avram in the original Hebrew. Abram is composed of two syllables, each a word – ***Av*** (father) and ***ram*** (lofty, high). Since Abraham or Abram is to be the father of the chosen people of God, his name is a prophecy of the future.

 Later, Abram’s name will be changed to Abraham or Avraham, demonstrating an increased status and responsibility. He becomes the father of many nations through his son Ishmael.

**Abraham’s Birth and Background**

Abram was born in Ur, a city of high culture and commerce on the Persian Gulf. Scripture speaks of Terah, Abram’s father, and the family leaving Ur and migrating to Haran (Genesis 11:31). The estimated date of their journey was 1800 BC.

 Abram is known in the Bible as Ha-Ivri, the Hebrew (14:13). Ivri derives from Ever, which means “crossing” and is employed to show that Abram and his people crossed over from the other side of the Rivers Tigris and Euphrates into Canaan, later to be called Israel, Abraham’s grandson Jacob gave the new name.

 Our knowledge of Abraham and his active life spans 100 years from his call from God, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you” (12:1). He died at the age of 175, buried by his sons Isaac and Ishmael.

 When Abram set out upon his journey, “He took his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, all the possessions they had accumulated and the people they had acquired in Haran” (12:5). Rabbinic tradition understands the phrase, “the people he had taken into his household..” to mean converts to the new faith.

**Abraham as Husband**

Abraham set a precedent for the modern concept of marriage and the relationship between husband and wife. The status of the woman as mere property in the ancient Near East has been well documented. While the Bible is often criticized regarding the status of women, in some cases the Bible raises that status to a very high degree.

 Abraham treats Sarah as a blood relative and considers her as close as a sister. He presents her as such on at least two occasions to Pharaoh and Abimelekh. We see Abraham and Sarah conversing as equals. At the point when God calls Abraham to sacrifice his son on Mount Moriah, formally known as the “Binding of Isaac,” Abraham is considerate of Sarah’s feelings, concealing from her this last supreme trial that God has placed before him, that may bring the death of Sarah’s only son (22)

**Abraham as Example of Hospitality**

Abraham’s treatment of the three visitors or angels who came to his tent (Genesis 18), illustrates the value he places on hospitality. He had just undergone painful circumcision in his old age. He was sitting at the entrance of his tent near a tree, seeking some relief from the heat of the day. At this very moment, three visitors approached him. Instead of attempting to avoid the strangers, Abraham hurries to receive them, “bowing low to the ground” in respect (18:2). He does everything in his power to persuade his guests to remain with him. He even promises little, just in order to persuade them that it won’t be any trouble.

 Soon Abraham is providing a lavish meal for his guests, personally selecting choice animals from his herd. A man of Abraham’s wealth could have allowed his servants to do all the preparations; however, Scripture demonstrates the personal involvement of Abraham and Sarah in this display of hospitality (18:6-8).

**Abraham as Caring Family Member**

Abraham’s concern for family extends beyond his immediate relatives. Scripture details the relationship that Abraham maintained with Lot, his brother Haran’s son. Although Haran died while still in Ur (11:28), Abraham cared for Lot throughout his stay in Mesopotamia, the journey into the land of Canaan, and their sojourn in Egypt.

 As Lot struggled through many trials leading to his capture during the war between the kings (Genesis 14), Abraham remained in close contact with his nephew, receiving word of Lot’s capture. Abraham did not stand idly by but moved into action, saving his nephew, possessions, women, and others. He did not abandon his nephew but resotred him to the evil city in accordance with Lot’s choice.

 Further, when God announces His intent to destroy the cities of the plain, Abraham knows that Lot and his family are still there, awaiting the impending disaster about to befall them. It is no coincidence that the angels who are sent to destroy are also involved in saving Lot and his wife and daughter.

**Abraham as Lover of God and Father of God’s People**

During the war between the kings (Genesis 14), we find Abraham involved, especially when his nephew was taken captive. Abraham maintained a large number of fighters and used strategy to defeat the enemy and rescue his family members held captive.

 God’s love and respect for Abraham are such that God questions, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do” (18:17) Abraham’s relationship with God is so close that he is later referred to as a friend of God (James 2:23). Abraham here is quite bold. He is respectful of God but holds God to the standards expected of a righteous judge: “Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (18:25)

 Perhaps the most outstanding example of the character of Abraham is his pleading with God for the sake of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (18:23-32). Abraham plays upon God’s attribute of mercy by mentioning God’s sense of righteousness, that He would never sweep away the righteous with the wicked. In the true fashion of the Middle Eastern bazaar, Abraham bargains with God: “What if there be fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? (18:24). He bargains God down to 45, 40, 30, 20 and 10. Finally, we see that the depravity of the cities is so great that even ten righteous people could not be found.

 This episode typifies the difference between the character of Abraham and that of all who came before him. Even the truly righteous attested to in the Bible, such as Noah who was mentioned as a “righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” (6:9), displayed human weakness. When hearing that the entire world will be drowned in the Flood, Noah is satisfied with the knowledge that he, his wife, his three sons, and their wives will be saved in the ark. Nowhere is there mentioned even one word of protest by Noah. Noah is content to bask in the glory of his own righteousness.

 But is it, conceivable to envision Abraham allowing God to proceed with the destruction of all life, without a good fight? This shows the uniqueness of Abraham as the father of God’s people.

**Abraham’s Self-Reliance**

Following the rescue of Lot and the war of the kings, Abraham encountered King Melchizedek of Salem (14:18-24). Here we see Abraham’s reliance on the King of the universe instead of the king of Salem. It is usual in the war to take booty and captives. Melchizedek wants to take the people and offers Abraham the booty or possessions. Abraham reminds Melchizedek of his solemn oath: “I will accept nothing belonging to you, not even a thread or the thong of a sandal so that you will never be able to say, “I made Abram rich” (14:23). Abraham is reinforcing the value of independent achievement. Abraham makes it clear that his reliance is not on other, only on the Creator of heaven and earth.

**Abraham’s Covenant with God**

Abraham, while believing in self-reliance to attain wealth and possessions, knows that offspring are a blessing from the Almighty, God appears to Abraham in a vision with a reassurance, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your very great reward” (15:1). Not afraid to challenge God as to His sense of justice, Abraham confronts God: O sovereigh Lord, what can you give me since I remain childless?” (15:2)

 Abraham received God’s assurance; “Look up at the heavens and count the stars if indeed you can count them so shall your offspring be” (15:5). The patriarchs and matriarchs of Israel are often barren (cf. Isaac and Rebecca, Leah and Rachel), infertile, or unloved for long periods. Abraham, while having great faith in divine assurances, realizes that there are physical limits, due to the aging process. Since Sarah is infertile and old, and Abraham is 86 years old, it appears impossible for her to give birth. Sarah offers Hagar, her Egyptian maidservant, to lie with Abraham (Genesis 16). Although an offspring is produced, Ishmael will not become the true heir of Abraham’s covenantal line.

 Thirteen additional years pass after the birth of Ishmael. Sarah is now 90 and Abraham 99. These years have not succeeded in producing a genuine heir. Apparently, the promise of numerous offspring cannot be fulfilled. Somehow, miraculously, Sarah and Abraham must give birth to a son in their old age. Their offspring, Isaac, will be a vital link in the chain, leading to the formation of a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation: (Exodus 19:6)

Taken from the book: Just Like Us – Biblical Models for Our Community compiled and edited by Bennie Goodwin, PhD Information gathered from information written by Rabbi Sanford H. Sdudnow

**The African American Connection**

1. **Strong Role Models**

Throughout American history, African Americans having had strong role models. Crispus Attucks, Frederick Douglass, Mary McLeod Bethune, Madame C. J. Walker, and Benjamin Mays are a few names that come to mind. But no society or group within a society has ever had enough strong role models.

 Abraham certainly qualifies as an outstanding role model with strong African ties. He often lived in hostile environments but refused to allow these places and circumstances too obliterate his faith in God. The United States is not a friendly land to African Americans. But like Abraham and many of our other ancestors, we will continue to survive, struggle and succeed.

1. **Our Own Rhythm**

In a world of conformity, Abraham was a nonconformist. The trends in his society would dictate that he follow the prudent path of silence. Abraham was never silent. He clearly saw the correct path in life, and he taught his family the right way. He raised a family that carried his name with dignity. No longer would anyone conceive of him synonymous with faith, dignity, strength, wealth and blessing.

 Is it by mistake that we are here in America? Should we become one more ingredient in the American “soup” or does God have a specific purpose for us here? Has God called us, like He did Abraham? How can we best seek God’s individual and collective will?

1. **Scars and Stars**

Along with American Indians and the Jews of Germany during World War II, undoubtedly African Americans have been victimized and persecuted. Abraham’s ability to overcome obstacles is refreshing in a world where casting blame on others for our present conditions often seems the order of the day. Booker T. Washington began life as a slave but rose up from slavery to become an adviser to presidents. Abraham was a man of humble birth. He came from a family that did not believe in Jehovah. But by God’s grace and much hard work he became a man of tremendous material wealth and enough spiritual riches to share with all the world.

1. **What Do You Think?**
2. Should we be asked or expected to forget our victimization?
3. Can we allow our wounds to stop us from achieving excellence?
4. Can we permit ourselves to become permanently dependent upon our former enslavers?
5. What principle from Abraham’s life applies to African American families today?

**Thursday, July 15, 2021**

**DEBORAH: Sister, Take Charge!**

Scriptures: **Judges 4:1-10, 14-15; 5:1-3**

 Social Problems in the Black Community

**Let’s Discover: Can God use a woman to lead men? To win victories? To bring peace?**

**Let’s Discover how God uses teamwork to being about spiritual and social change!**

Deborah was Israel’s only woman judge. Her story is found in Judges, chapters four and five. We do not know her genealogy, when or where she was born, and there is no record of where she died. We do know that she was married to Lapidoth and lived between Bethel and Ramah in the hill country of Ephraim (Judges 4:4-5)

 Deborah’s name means “bee” and Lapidoth’s name means “torhes” or “lightning flashes.” Their names and possibly their personalities and ministries complemented each other and provided the love and support they both needed.

 Deborah was also a prophetess, agitator, poetess, and maternal figure in Israel. Because of Deborah’s dedication, God allowed her to judge Israel for 40 years (Judges 5:31).

 Deborah is important to us because she represents what God can do through a women who submits herself to God’s will. Let’s study Deborah’s life to see the heroic part she played in delivering God’s people.

**Deborah: Woman of Many Roles**

Deborah was a ruler, the fifth judge. All of Israel was her jurisdiction. Deborah’s responsibility as a judge was to hear and decide cases. Biblical judges were chosen by God and made their decisions based on the laws of God.

 Periodically the Children of Israel needed to be delivered from bondage caused by their worship of idol gods. In addition to hearing and deciding cases, the judges’ responsibilities were to protect Israel from attack and do battle when enemies were to be subdued. As a result of Deborah’s leadership, Israel enjoyed justice and peace.

 Deborah was a prophetess. A prophetess is a female who speaks for God and interprets events in light of God’s words and works. Deborah had to be able to discern the purposes of God and declare them to others. In biblical days prophets and prophetesses were mediators between God and His people. They were divinely inspired and correspond to some preachers and pastors of today.

 In the Old Testament, only three women are said to have been prophetesses: Miriam, the sister of Moses (Exodus 15:20); Hulda, a woman who spoke in the time of Josiah (2Kings 22:14-20); Deborah (Judges 4 and 5). Deborah used her gift as a political and judicial leader of the nation for the good of her people.

 Deborah was an agitator. An agitator stirs up and excites public discussion with the view of producing change. Deborah stirred up Israel’s concern about its low spiritual condition. She aroused the nation from its lethargy and despair. She awoke in them a determination to free themselves from their situation of bondage and degradation.

 As poetess, Deborah’s contribution to history and literature appears in Judges 4 and 5 in two forms. The first is the prose of chapter 4 and the second is the poetry in chapter 5. The poetry is commonly known as the “Song of Deborah,” a celebration of victory. The prose and poetry tell essentially the same story of two Israelite heroines Deborah, who spurred the military leader Barak on to victory; and Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, who assassinated the fleeing enemy General Sisera.

 Finally, in addition to all of these roles, Deborah was a wife to Lapidoth and mother to a nation that had turned its back on God. With love, care, tenderness, and toughness when needed, she was instrumental in helping Israel get right with God. We have no record of her having experienced actual motherhood, but Lockyer paints this beautiful picture of Deborah:

 “The highest of all of her remarkable gifts was her trusts in God which is ever the source of any woman’s highest adornment. As she sat under her palm tree to rule in righteousness an translate the revelation of God, her heart was filled with grace divine which diffused itself like a sweet smelling savor over the whole land.”

**Deborah: Woman of Action**

Deborah was chosen and raised up by God to lead His people at a crucial time in their history. Jabin was king of the Canaanites. He reign in Hazor and oppressed the Israelites for 20 years (4:3). Not much information is given on him personally, but he enlisted Sisera as commander of his army and used him as an instrument of oppression. Siera lived in Harosheth Haggoyim and was the supervisor of Jabin’s military forces.

 One day while Deborah was arbitrating disputes, God revealed to her how to deliver the Israleites out of the hand of Sisera and the Canaanites. Deborah then set for Barak, a military strategist, to come and organize the Israelites’ military forces. Barak said that he would come and lead the military only if Deborah would agree to go with him into battle. Deborah agreed but gave Barak this warning: “And she said, I will surely go with thee; notwithstanding the journey that thou takest shall not be for thine honour; for the Lord shall sell Sisera into the hand of a woman. And Deborah arose, and went with Barak to Kedesh” (4:9)

 Deborah and Barak went to Kedesh, where he summoned the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali. Barak organized 10,000 men to assist them in the battle. King Jabin summoned Sisera, also an outstanding military leader, to organize his military force. Sisera had 900 iron chariots and the men from Harosheth Haggoyim. Deborah gave the word, and Barak and his army charged Sisera’s forces and killed them all, except Sisera (4:14-15)

 Sisera escaped, abandoned his chariot, and fled on foot. He ran to Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite because there was a friendly relationship between King Jabin and the Kenite clan. Jael heard Sisera coming, ran out to meet him, and called him into her tent. Sisera went in, covered him up, and hid him. He asked her to stand in the tent entrance and told her if anyone came and asked if she had seen him, she was to say no. Sisera was so exhausted from running that he fell fast asleep. While he was asleep, Jael took a tent peg and drove it through his temple, killing him (4:21).

 When Barak came in search of Sisera, Jael went out to meet him and called him to see the man he was looking for. When he looked in, he found Sisera dead.

 That day God delivered the Israelites out of the hands of Jabin, and Jael was the woman Deborah was talking about when she prophesied to Barak, “God will deliver Sisera over to a woman” (4:9)

 Barak is included among the judges who liberated Israel from her oppressors (1Samuel 12:11), and he I mentioned in the New Testament catalog of people who exercised great faith in God (Hebrews 11:32). Barak’s courage resulted form the encouragement of Deborah, his spiritual mother, who is not mentioned in either 1 Samuel or Hebrews 11.

**Deborah: An Effective Leader**

Dr. Bennie Goodwin has defined and effective leader as “a person who gets the right things done by the right people at the right time and place.

 As we examine Deborah’s life as a judge of Israel, we discover that she is good example of an effective leader. Deborah was faced with two problems, one spiritual and one military (Judges 4:1-3). She handled the spiritual problem by motivating the people of Israel to turn back to God. She handled the military problem by finding the right people to organize their forces and lead them into a battle in which God gave them the victory (4:6-7, 16).

 Deborah was a woman of constructive action. By God’s revelation, she determined what was right and proceeded to do it. She knew that in order to accomplish her goal shse had to identify her problem and formulated her purposes.

 Secondly, she chose the right person to work with her. She was aware of the problems and potential of the person she selected to help her. When it was time to go to battle, she was very realistic. She knew she had a military problem; therefore, she needed someone with military experience to help her. She sent for Barak because he was known for his military expertise (4:15-16). Barak was a great battle organizer, but this time was not good in leading the fight alone (4:8). Knowing this she allowed him to organize the troops but assisted him in leading the troops into battle. She allowed him to do what he could do and assisted him only when she was needed.

 Finally, Deborah was a leader who spent her time and energy wisely. When Good called her to be Israel’s only woman judge, she made herself available and set about doing God’s work. Does this imply that she prayed and practiced her religious convictions on a daily basis? How else could she be prepared to accept God’s call and challenge? Deborah set herself apart from anything that would interfere with the effective carrying out of the task God had given her. Deborah situated herself in a place where the people had access to her and she judged them with wisdom and spiritual guidance as she was led by God. In Judges 4:5 it is written: “And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim; and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment.”

Taken from the book: Just Like Us – Biblical Models for Our Community compiled and edited by Bennie Goodwin, PhD Information gathered from information written by Chaplain Melody L. H. Goodwin